



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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reasons, of course) such as these, "Keep to the right on the pavement;" "Do not throw orange-peel about in the streets and paper about in the parks;" "Keep out of a crowd, unless you can do some good in it;" "Do not put your boots upon the seat opposite you in a railway carriage;" "Do not talk so loud to your school-fellows in public as to annoy strangers." These are small things, very small things; but they are at least things, not mere airy words; and they may be a preparation for greater things. I make no apology for calling your attention once more down to these minor matters at the conclusion of my remarks. The love of our neighbours, individually and collectively—that indeed it is with which we desire to imbue our pupils; and that is the very altar of morality. But one goes up to an altar by steps. And, as a first step towards loving one's neighbour, it is not amiss sometimes for a child to learn not to make himself a nuisance to his neighbour.

Days of Thanksgiving.—I have only one suggestion to make. It has always seemed to me Moses was truly wise and inspired in instituting national holidays to commemorate national deliverances. We have sacred holidays, with more or less trace of sacred associations; and we have "bank holidays." Our cousins on the other side of the Atlantic have followed in the path of Moses. They think, and rightly, that they have much to be thankful for, and they have instituted days to express their thankfulness. But have we not also, we who join hands in a family circle of freedom round the world, much reason for being thankful? If one day in the year were set apart as Thanksgiving Day for the English-speaking races throughout our Empire, I should not indeed expect that the millions of toiling fathers would on that day resort much to church or chapel; but, on the eve of Thanksgiving Day, I should feel sure that every teacher worthy of the name would welcome the opportunity of declaring to the children to whom he stands in this respect as a parent, the "noble works" that God has done for our nation in our days and in the old time before us, and would not omit some reference to the "noble works" that are still in store for us, if we follow in His path of righteousness. Such lessons, so given, would greatly stimulate the minds of children, and might in time become a perceptible power working in our country for unity, and strength, and civic morality.

ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

BY RICHARD TIMBERG, G.D.

(Of Stockholm.)

(Continued from page 45.)

A HARMONIOUS development is the true aim of physical exercises, and this is a fact which the educator must never lose sight of, nor must he forget that the body of a growing individual is far more likely than that of a grown-up person to take impressions, whether it be for good or evil, from the exercises or occupations indulged in. We can easily understand that this must be the case, if we take into consideration the process of growth of the human skeleton, upon which the size, shape, and proportions of the body entirely depend. The skeleton is not formed all at once in its final hardness and strength, but develops gradually from softer tissues, cartilage, &c. At birth there is scarcely a hard bone in the human body. Ossification (the formation of bone) takes place with growth, and is not completed until a later period. Thus the thigh bone is not completely formed till about the 21st year, the ribs about the 15th, the breast bone not until about the 30th, and so on. Therefore the first consideration with the young must be to build up the skeleton, the framework, and the muscles ought to be used as means to this end. In a child any attempt to form "muscle," in the athletic sense of the word, will only have the result of stunting and arresting its growth. This fact makes it not always an undoubted cause of satisfaction, *per se*, to hear that in boys, hardly in their teens, the circumference of the arm has increased during the school term by such and such a figure. Measurements of this kind are, besides, exceedingly difficult to take with exactitude, and that reduces still more their value. It is no great cause for alarm to find a youth about 14 or 15 years of age appearing long and lanky, angular and loose-jointed. He or she has, it is said, "somewhat outgrown his or

her strength." In reality development in height has been out of proportion to muscular development; but if during this critical period they can only be guarded from acquiring any deformity, their appearance will in some few years' time greatly change. Development of muscle then having in due course taken place, they still seem tall, may be, but not disproportionately so, as the whole body is now better knit together and united, the shape more rounded.

The great importance of a capacious chest and sound lungs has before been alluded to; but I think this matter deserves a little special consideration, as it is the essential of all Physical Education. It is not my intention to inflict upon this audience any description of the process of respiration. Suffice it to remind you of the intimate connection between respiration and circulation, the two functions upon the normal course of which the individual's capability of physical development entirely depends; and how the detrimental influences of the children's restraint on the school bench in the first place attack the chest—and we cannot but realize that the development of this part of the body is a *conditio sine qua non*. To ensure the greatest possible capacity of the lungs, the first observance is to keep the spine straight. We have in due place mentioned how the leaning posture, by compressing the abdomen, impedes the free movement of the diaphragm. Besides the action of this muscle our means of producing an inspiration is by elevating the ribs. The mere straightening of that part of the spine to which the ribs are attached has this effect. But there are besides a great number of muscles whose special object is to cause such an elevation. Many of these muscles, passing from the neck down on the chest, are for their effect more or less dependent upon the head's being kept erect, with the chin in and the shoulders well drawn back. I purposely avoid going into anatomical details, particularly mentioning names, but I think that, from what has been said, it will be understood that the poorly developed individual, whom we pictured a little while ago, with his poking chin, round shoulders and flat chest, not merely presents a less pleasing appearance, but that here, as usual, health and beauty are identical, and that, therefore, his bad carriage has a more serious aspect.

To correct such tendencies, so as to widen the chest, straighten the spine, and secure an erect carriage of head and shoulders, and to further a harmonious development of the body might, therefore, be given as the *aim* of Physical Education. But still we have not come to what really are the means of accomplishing this great aim. The different forms of physical exercise in the shape of outdoor games and sports, which we have hitherto considered, possess many excellent features, and are well worthy of our encouragement, when practised in moderation; but they do not altogether supply the want. They need to be supplemented with regular gymnastic exercises, systematically carried on, not for play, not for show, but as a part of the school hygiene, for the benefit of the children.

The term "Gymnastics" has the disadvantage of having been greatly used and misused: almost anything in the way of artificial movements or acrobatic tricks passing under this name, and it is therefore liable to be misunderstood. For use in school, the gymnastic exercises must be carefully sifted, and considered from one point of view only,—the physical well-being of the children. Gymnastics is "the science of bodily exercises and their practice in accordance with the natural laws and requirements of the human organism." This definition excludes every movement which has not a bearing upon, or a reason for existence in, those natural laws—laws which tend to the development and the maintenance of that harmony between the different parts of our system, the result of which is *health*.

The object is not to learn to perform certain exercises, it is to produce a certain effect upon the body, and the specific exercises are the means to that end. Each individual pupil ought to practise the movements for his own benefit and according to his ability, not for comparison with others. The spirit of competition may be very well to bring individuals to perfection in specialities, but it is still more certain to keep back those that are naturally less favoured, and who precisely for that reason are more in need of the exercise; competition ought therefore to be excluded from the school gymnastics. On the other hand it is desirable that pupils of too varying ability should not be brought together in the same class. Such variation does not go entirely according

to age, height or sex: every case has to be judged on its own merits; but, as in the Mental Education the school is divided into a great many forms, so there should be a division with regard to the Physical Education; and a child ought not at all to be admitted to a gymnasium class without some knowledge having been gained as to its physical condition.

Gymnastic exercises ought not to be classified according to the various apparatus on which they happen to be executed. This is a mere detail, and of far less importance than the effect they have upon the body, what particular part or group of muscles is brought into play. From this point of view there are certain distinctive classes, such as shoulder-blade movements, abdominal movements, lateral trunk movements, and others.

The order of these different classes of movements during a lesson is of no small importance. When we reflect how every movement has its effect, local and general, upon the system, it is clear that the exercises must not follow each other anyhow, but with due regard paid to this effect. For instance, an exercise which has unduly increased the action of the heart and lungs, must be followed by one which has a quieting influence upon the same organs. Within the specific classes a carefully arranged progression from the easier to the more difficult exercises must be observed.

For a full enjoyment of the benefits of a gymnastic training a proper gymnasium is required. It ought to be a large, light, and well-ventilated room, and fitted up with a certain amount of apparatus. I shall not enter upon any discussion of the relative value of different apparatus. None is absolutely bad, nor any absolutely good. It depends entirely upon how they are used. But some are less likely to be misused than others, and therefore decidedly superior; and as the exercises are distinctly not to be performed for show, such luxuries as the spring-board and mattresses are superfluous. It may look better to the gallery if the jumping by artificial help is carried a little farther, but no benefit is accruing therefrom to the pupils, and therefore the spring-board has no right to be included among the apparatus of a school gymnasium; and this done away with, mattresses are not needed, as the children, when jumping from the floor, should also be able to land on the floor, without coming to

any harm; and this they will, if, in instructing the jump, due attention is paid to its most important part—the landing. Mattresses would only tempt to carelessness.

Rational gymnastic exercises are, however, by no means exclusively practised on apparatus. Before the pupils can be allowed the use of any apparatus, they ought to go through a certain amount of simple preparatory movements, executed in the rank. These so-called free movements, or what is generally here termed “drill,” are in themselves very efficient in ensuring a free and easy gait and correct carriage, if performed with proper care and precision; and I hold that this is most easily done, if no weights or hand apparatus are used, as the term “free” really implies. These movements should therefore never be omitted, even with the most advanced pupils. They have also a great educational value, as they teach order and discipline, not least, by being performed to word of command. That principle, instead of imitation, ought, as far as possible, to be carried through even with regard to the exercises on apparatus.

The custom of performing free exercises according to music, on the other hand, is not to be recommended, as there is the fear of the rhythm then becoming the first consideration, at the expense of the precision of the movements. It is argued in favour of music that it makes the exercises more interesting, and consequently a greater recreation to the pupils. It is quite true that the gymnastic exercises ought to be recreative, but this is not to be confounded with “amusing”; for to provide amusement is not the object of Physical Education. Still, recreative in a higher sense of the word, bodily exercises, rightly executed, certainly are. For by muscular activity the blood is drawn from central to peripheral parts of the system, congestions of the brain and internal organs—caused by intellectual work, combined with long sitting still on the school-benches—are thus relieved, and a recreation takes place as beneficial to the mind as to the body.

With regard to the *time* that ought to be allotted to the gymnastic instruction, the ideal is obviously that the lessons should be daily, as the defects in school life, which they are intended to neutralize, are constantly at hand. But, unfortunately, that is not always possible with the present

arrangements in the schools; and then, naturally, the old rule applies—that “half a loaf is better than no bread.” There is a difficulty to find sufficient time for one special subject in these days of cramming; and, moreover, for one that is very often looked upon as one of the extras. This is, however, a fatal mistake to begin with. Physical Education must not be considered merely a subject *de luxe*, but rather as of greater importance to the individual in after life than any one other subject, as it holds a unique position by its aim and the object of its introduction in the school work. Here instruction does not mean preparation for an examination with questions and answers. It means, rather, the supplying of a need, the need of movement, which nature requires for the healthy development of our children. What is the use of airy, well-ventilated class-rooms, if the children have not got large enough lungs in their narrow chests to benefit by the fresh air? What is even the use of intellectual instruction, if the overtaxed brains of the children are not capable of digesting the mental food they get during school hours?

Physical Instruction ought, therefore, most decidedly, to have its recognized place in the curriculum of every school; neither ought it to be omitted from the reports; not so that the pupil's proficiency in this subject should influence his advance from one form to another, although the proficiency too ought to be reported upon; but so that the behaviour observed in the gymnasium is of equal importance to that during any other lesson.

Another point for consideration is to select the most favourable time of the day for the gymnastic lessons. They have to be fitted in with regard to other work, and to the meal-times. Violent exercise after a full meal is naturally bad; and a course of physical instruction should not be carried out in the case of children who are tired by a long day's attendance in school, or who are badly in want of food.

The length of each lesson ought not to be more than forty minutes, and much can be done in twenty minutes, for, during that time, the pupil should be kept in constant occupation without being idle for a moment. By a carefully arranged order between the different exercises this is quite possible, without exhausting the pupils; and the lesson will

be all the more enjoyable and recreative by the life that is thus put into it.

About the *dress* for the gymnasium, there is no need to be very particular. Light shoes, with india-rubber soles, are rather a necessity, but in other respects almost any dress will do that is light and loose, especially round the neck (collars off), and which gives full freedom to all movements. Thus girls must not be hampered by too long skirts, nor, it is needless to say, by such abominations as corsets.

I hardly know if I can be supposed in this connection to speak about the school diet and mode of living generally. Of course this is of the utmost importance for the Physical Education. “Early to bed and early to rise” is as good a rule from our present point of view as from any other; particularly early to bed, for children want a great deal of sleep. Plenty of water for external use is a boon which, fortunately for the young, is well recognized in this country, and a swimming bath is a very valuable accessory to the Physical Education in a school, swimming forming one of the most perfect of exercises. I have been told here, in England, that clergymen in Norway refuse to confirm their young parishioners if they are not able to swim. Of course, I do not believe that; but certainly it is a great loss to any man, or woman, not to have learned this useful art.

Unless the children are properly fed, no form of exercise will benefit them very much. I have once before compared the human body to a machine. This comparison holds good even in that respect, that a sufficient supply of fuel is the first condition for the working of it; and I have no doubt that there are many schools of the poor in the large cities of this country, for which a soup kitchen would be a much more useful institution than a gymnasium.

The ordinary English diet, such as children in more fortunate circumstances generally enjoy, is both as regards quantity and quality very satisfactory. There is, however, perhaps, a tendency to serve the food a little more highly flavoured with hot spices than ought to be necessary for a child with a healthy appetite and uncorrupted taste, and that is a pity, for my opinion is that the *habitual* use of hot spices and tea and coffee is much more injurious to a child than, for instance, occasionally to taste intoxicating

drinks, with which it in some respects might be compared. Be this said without any intention to offend the laudable temperance cause.

I am afraid I have now kept your attention longer than your interest, and must, therefore, bring my paper to a rapid close. I have tried to demonstrate, first, the necessity of Physical Education in the school, and then the means we have at our disposal for such an education—placing systematic gymnastics foremost, as that for which nothing else can be substituted. Then I have endeavoured to point out the broad principles and considerations that ought to be kept in view in arranging the gymnastic instruction, at the same time purposely avoiding going into the details, or even mentioning the name, of any special system of gymnastics. But, that I should unhesitatingly advocate Ling's Swedish system, will, I dare say, from the beginning have been regarded as a foregone conclusion by my audience. I admit, willingly, that such is the case, confident as I am that those of you to whom my representation of what a Physical Education ought to be has in any way appealed as sound and rational, will not think my preference unjustified, for this representation has in all essentials been but a description of the Swedish system of Physical Education.

BIRDS OF LAKE LAND.

THE GREAT TITMOUSE: *PARUS MAYOR*.

BY MISS M. L. ARMITT.

WALKING along the bare woodlands, some mild and muggy January morning, one may hear all at once a sound familiar from bygone springs, and prophetic of a new spring: it is the loud love-couplet of the Great Titmouse. It is not, indeed, so loud as it will shortly be, but it is piercing enough withal. "*Fee-dle, fee-dle, fee-dle,*" says the bird, with beak opening wide at every reiterated accent; or, as a friend has aptly rendered it, with a drop from B flat to F, "*Eat-it, eat-it, eat-it.*"

This is the note that has earned for the bird the title of Saw-sharpener, which is apt enough. For there is a steel-edge quality in the tone reminiscent of all sorts of metallic occupations; and I have known a bird, by means of a third tone thrown lightly in (thus producing a triplet) to imitate the stroke of a blacksmith's hammer, with the shivering ring of the anvil that follows. Nay, I have even heard it produce a double stroke and ring, thus making its note a four-divided sound! But this is possibly refining! and certainly is asking too much consideration from the patient reader. As a matter of fact, no species of bird is invariable in its notes, though it has an actual code peculiar to the tribe, but will—in individuals of genius—occasionally exceed the limits of the tribal art; and so the loud love-note of the Great Titmouse may be roundly called a couplet.

This bird is besides a great conversationalist, like all Titmice. It talks with variety; is capable of a soft whistling—"ou-ie, ou-ie," or "*mizzi-louie-louie,*"—which seems to bespeak a dual content; and, when flustered or excited, calls—"speak, speak, shur-r r-r." Now these are notes for all the year, and are probably uttered by both the sexes, while the couplet is used by the male bird alone, and betokens the nesting tie. That it is heard thus early in the year implies that the bird's